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Written Testimony for SB 24 - Ban of E-Cigarette sales to minors and the definition of these products as "Tobacco."

Last year I spoke before you and told you my story: My name is Cheryl Richter. I'm a 20 year resident of Stamford, and a voter. I smoked for 30 years and never had another cigarette after I tried my first e-cig. It was a miracle. I set out to tell every smoker I knew about e-cigarettes. It became my passion.

I speak as a single mom raising a teenager to do what's right; as a small business owner who manufactures products here in Connecticut and is opening a store in Norwalk. And as a member of the National Vapers Club, which made up of vapers who volunteer to raise money for research, educate, and help protect the rights of vapers.

I work three jobs to keep a roof over my son's head. My business partner is a carpenter. We are NOT big tobacco. We are entrepreneurs that saw a safer way out of a life-long addiction. We are anti-tobacco – vehemently. What we have in common with all the other vaping business owners we know—what we all share—is a desire to help people rid their lives of a habit that kills.

Big Tobacco doesn't like us either, and only entered this industry when we started hurting their bottom line. We share that we are all victims of tobacco. We all know someone who has died from smoking, many close family members. In the past 2 years I lost a good friend, two aunts and my father to smoking related illnesses. It's a pain that I do not wish on anyone. That pain has fueled my passion.

We share that anti-smoking passion with the ALA, the American Cancer Society and the other anti-smoking organizations, who for some bizarre reason, don't stand with us.

What we don't share with these groups is an ideology that says only a pharmaceutical product is worth endorsing because Big Pharma writes big checks. What we don't share is a dogma that says because something is similar in name or appearance it has the same dangers, especially when one burns and causes cancer, while the other is electronic and has no carcinogens. We don't share the belief that vaping glamorizes smoking, because we are not-smoking. Just like it's not glamorizing alcohol when you drink a glass of grape juice, just because it looks like wine.

We do share these anti-group's belief that children should not use vaping products and that stores should not sell them to children. We were marketed to by Big Tobacco when we were children. Connecticut vape shops have collectively volunteered not to sell to children and have enacted self regulations – no one under 18 in their stores, childproof caps, warning labels, etc. We believe there

should be a ban to minors in Connecticut—most of us are parents ourselves. Yes, it's true, we REALLY don't want another generation to grow up addicted to nicotine.

What we do not agree with is adding in the definition of vaping products as "tobacco for regulatory purposes."

Jeff Stier, who is a Senior Fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research in Washington, D.C., and heads its Risk Analysis Division, wanted me to ask this question of you about your proposed ban to minors: "Why ruin a perfectly good bill by putting in a factually incorrect claim that e-cigarettes are tobacco, when they're not?"

Why indeed? We know that last year, the ALA hop-scotched across the country opposing simply-worded bans to minors in every state they could...just to keep them legal and people could accuse us of marketing and selling to children. Here it is a year later and we've got a bill that the industry would love to support only it's got terminology that could decimate our businesses.

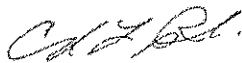
We don't believe that we should be made to follow the same punitive regulations as an industry that markets to kill, nor should we be taxed the same way, or forced to register for tobacco licenses. We don't sell tobacco! These rules could come into play if we're deemed tobacco.

It is an insult to me and my colleagues to be accused of selling to children. It is an insult to be called Tobacco. See this for what it is. Scratch out the tobacco definition and please just pass a ban to minors.

What we believe is that when free-market entrepreneurs discover an answer to a decades-long problem, it should be supported in its infancy by our state representatives. Not squashed to the point that adult smokers are warned away from them by hysteria so they continue smoking. Not killed by making it so expensive that we couldn't even afford to make the products.

Smoking kills ½ million people a year in the US. If there was one thing you could do to really help your constituents, it would be to open up the market and lead smokers to this life-changing alternative.

Sincerely,



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